



Oracle State Park  
Center for Environmental Education  
P.O. Box 700  
Oracle, AZ 85623  
(520) 896-2425

## VOLUNTEER NEWSLETTER

July 2013

### THANKS VOLUNTEERS FOR HELP WITH SUMMER WEATHER DATA

Thanks **Mary Huebner, Stan Bembenek, Gene Smith, Collins & Susie Cochran and Laurie Bryant** for taking care of the daily temperature/precipitation readings for NOAA over the summer months!

The hottest days at Oracle State Park this year...105 degrees Fahrenheit on June 30 plus a few days at 102 degrees. Otherwise the park has averaged in the 90's. Precipitation in July so far: 2.25 inches.

### THANKS GARDENERS

Thanks **Mary Ann Pogany, Chuck LeFevre, Cindy and Neil Krupicka and Val Bembenek** for tending to the ranch house landscaping -- and any other volunteers who've watered the patio beds and monitored and maintained the irrigation system.

### THANKS FRIENDS OF ORACLE STATE PARK

There's a long list of reasons to say thank you: for the new patio furniture, for supporting educational programming with funding in the last year:

- Arizona Humanities Council talks by Robin Pinto on Cattle & Ranching, and Archaeologist Allen Dart on Ancient Rock Calendars
- Plant Walk by Sonoran Herbalist, John Slattery, Astronomy Night with Arizona Star Tours and Bat Ecologist Ronnie Sidner's Presentation
- Desert Harvest Event support of hammer-mill rental, kids' activity supplies and a native foods sampling booth by Laurie Melrood; also pumpkins, and live music by Peruvian Band "Los Traicioneros" and local acoustic vocalist, Fred Terry

Also thanks for new computer equipment to aid power-point presentations! and thanks for advocacy to benefit the park, projects in the works, outreach booths -- like Oracle Oaks Festival, and for volunteer recognition potluck financial support!

Thanks to **Mary Ann Pogany** for your leadership as Friends President for the past two years!

The Friends of Oracle State Park are currently seeking volunteers to become new board members, specifically, to take on the role of Board President beginning January 2014. Meetings are once every two months and training is included for a one to two year commitment, to help carry forward their mission as a 501-c3 non-profit fund raising organization --to help support preservation of the historic Kannally Ranch House, and to support educational programs offered to park visitors of all ages.

Friends of Oracle State Park was the first friends group formed in the Arizona State Parks system, and has served as a model for new friends groups that have followed. It's a crucial partnership for Oracle State Park, but relies on volunteer energy and creativity to sustain it forward, and it's critical now to pass the baton to another leader. Think about it before November, and consider putting a little peer pressure on friends, for a good cause.

### THANKS 2012/13 VOLUNTEERS

**Special Events:** Collins & Susie Cochran, Wendy Ostrander, Bob Erwin, Val Bembenek, Mary Ann Pogany, Cindy Krupicka, Jenine Mayer, Bob Elder, Charla & Kerby Wright, Jill Gomery, Mike McFarland, Laurie Bryant and Harvey Kneisc.

**MORE THANKS...**

**Maintenance:** Harvey Kneisc, David Goodwin, Bob Sherman, Stan Parkinson, Tom Kimmel, Harry McWilliams, Sycamore Canyon Academy, Catalina State Park Volunteers, Mary Ann Pogany, Bob Elder, Stan Bembenek, Chip Parfet, Cindy Krupicka – I know there are others!

**Office/Gift-shop Visitor Contact:** Judy Smith, Jill Gomery, Lournene Frey, Harvey Kneisc, Teresa Kneisc, Val Bembenek, Laurie Bryant, Anne Lucie

**Gatehouse Visitor Contact:** Gene Smith, Pat Berky, Stan Parkinson, Harvey Kneisc, Dick Boyer, Karen Stevenson, Kathi Sanders, Liz LaFarge, Sheerie & Gene Slatton, Ed McManus, Chip Parfet, Laurie Bryant, Jill Gomery, Val Bembenek, Stan Bembenek



Volunteer Pat Berky at Gatehouse, always a great attitude as park advocate

**House Tours & Interpretive Programs:** Mary Bast, Laurie Bryant, Val Bembenek, Rick Gagnon, Mary Ellen Flynn, Gaston Meloche, Kathie Jordan, Stan Bembenek, Wolfgang Mueller, Dick Boyer

**Environmental Education School Programs:** Nancy Manning, Don Raffety, Dave Corrigan, Shay Cardell, Mike McFarland, Sheila Clarkin, Rick Gagnon, Phil McNamee and Darrell Klesch

**Special Thanks:** to Val Bembenek and Mary Ann Pogany for help with volunteer program coordination: Val for submitting online hours from the office timesheet notebook, and your tremendous help with publicity – and for coordinating Hammer-mill volunteer shifts. And thanks to Mary Ann for recruiting volunteers and setting dates for cleaning work-parties. Thanks also to Mary Ann for

continuing to coordinate the water schedule/control timer with gardeners. Thanks to **Harvey Kneisc and John Rendall** for working with AmeriCorps youth on maintenance projects.

### **NEW PARK OPEN SCHEDULE**

Oracle State Park is open seasonally on a limited basis. The park is now open to the public October through April, weekends only, Saturdays and Sundays from 8am – 5pm. The park reopens October 5, 2013 every weekend through Sunday, April 28, 2014. During the open season, the park will continue to be available weekdays by reservation for group environmental education programs, and for special use permit events.

**Programs in the planning stages for Fall:** A Birding and Breakfast Event Opening Weekend, Saturday October 5 & Sunday, October 6. A Children's Workshop Saturday, October 19 using native desert materials to make useful tools (like rope!). Also, more Nature Art Workshops (Papermaking October 26!), guided walks, presentations and hopefully more live music events at the Kannally Ranch House. We'll work on citizen scientist opportunities, a Benefit Horse Ride Event, and Taste of the Catalinas Holiday Gift Fair the second weekend in December, featuring desert foods and local artisan gifts and music.

### **ONSITE CARETAKER POSITION**

Thanks **Harvey and Teresa Kneisc!** Thanks again Harvey, for your tremendous help coordinating the AmeriCorps group, and for your attention to fixing plumbing and solar lighting issues; also thanks for all the wood gathering and coordinating community wood pick up, assisting volunteers and rangers with odd jobs, visitor contact, and for your general good nature and good fit with this place. Best of luck to you both with your family this coming winter in Alaska. Burr ☺

Also....a belated thank you once again to **David Goodwin** who helped get the park ready for opening last fall, improved the wildlife waterhole and more, fixed every gate, shared great pictures (by the way, the giant agave century plant stalk in the parking lot, just fell to the ground in a recent wind/rainstorm).

We've really had good fortune with onsite caretakers! Keep us in mind for the future! New

applicants will be considered soon to help with the fall season.

### **WOOD AVAILABLE!**

**Park Manager, Steve Haas**, will not stop barking in my ear until the wood stacked along the main road is GONE before the park re-opening in October. Please help take it away! **Jennifer can be contacted** at: [jrinio@azstateparks.gov](mailto:jrinio@azstateparks.gov) or at Catalina State Park: (520) 628-5798.

### **SUMMER MAINTENANCE NEEDS**

Any trail maintenance work that begins in July or August will make fall park re-opening prep easier!! Please grab loppers, weed-whip, or contact Jennifer if you're available to hike the Wildlife Corridor Trail, Manzanita Trail, Mariposa Trail or others to get a head start on clearing cat-claw.

Summer Trail Patrol Volunteers should also look out for fence-line breaks and fallen trees blocking paths. Additionally, we need mesquite beans picked for the school programs, and the corral area needs grass mowed and vegetation cut back. Please contact Jennifer if you can help.

### **NEW VOLUNTEER ORIENTATION PROCEDURE**

We have a new system in place. If any of you old timers since spring reopening 2012 or long before that, who feel cheated for never getting the official orientation ritual highlighting: procedure for submitting online timesheets vs. the new hardcopy record timesheet notebook in the office, expectations/benefits of the volunteer program, roles and priorities, and making sure you have all the essentials, like a parking pass, nametag and free uniform shirt....please set a date with Jennifer.

Everyone! -- Even if you had the above new volunteer orientation this past year, there is now additional information you need to read and initial. Some of you who work with school programs or money collecting fees, will be asked to do a quick online training and sign off once completed. More details will be given by the time ranger staff is back on park on a regular basis this fall. Active Volunteer Files will return to the downstairs Volunteer Room to be checked periodically for messages.

### **PAST YEAR HIGHLIGHTS**

**Desert Harvest Event** – a smaller version of the Calabazas Festival in October -- desert foods interactive booths and vendors, live music, mesquite pod grinding hammer-mill, pumpkins and kids activities at the Group Use Area.



Jennifer's Halloween Pumpkin Carving of a Regal Horned Lizard

**AmeriCorps** - For a month in late November/ mid-December, 11 AmeriCorps Service Volunteers, age 19-24, camped out at Oracle State Park and helped with maintenance tasks including painting, trail work, moving heavy things, assembling school program materials, and more. The program is like a domestic Peace Corps with a 10-month commitment, forming small groups that travel around the U.S. taking on different projects for two weeks to a month. As a team we got a lot done, and rangers were temporarily forced out of the office into the backcountry to address to-do list tasks long overdue. We expect to have another group return to OSP in the coming year.

**Weekend programs** - Additional programs not dependent on FOSP funding included live music by Dale's husband's band "One Without", astronomy by Tucson Amateur Astronomer's Association, "Wildcats of the Sky Islands" (presentation by Sky Island Alliance biologist), Bob Scarborough (Geology & Recycling), Ed Moll (Reptiles), Kathi Anderson (Raptor I.D. & bird walk), Kathie Schroeder (Harris Hawk), Marceline VandeWater (butterfly walk), Linda Leigh (worm compost talk), Cyn-d Turner (guided llama walks), Jim Verrier (plant walk) and Audubon's Doug Jenness (bird walk).

Some gems of wisdom from Linda Leigh's talk on composting:

*"Garbage is a decision – waste isn't waste"*

*until it's wasted."*

*"Consider your habits, and changing them."*

**"Absolutely amazing! We loved it.  
Thank you to all the volunteers!!!"**

*Email comment from Red Rock Middle School Teacher,  
Liza Bohn, who brought out 60 6<sup>th</sup> & 7<sup>th</sup> graders for the  
Oracle Odyssey Program on November 9<sup>th</sup>.*

*The Oracle Odyssey Program engages students with  
activities teaching about habitat needs and  
interrelationships between plants, animals and people.*

*This fall was the first time the program was offered again  
since the park closing in 2009.*

### **MORE PAST YEAR HIGHLIGHTS...**

#### **Environmental Education School Programs-**

20 days of school programs were conducted this past season serving 744 students. Of those, 11 were Adventure Programs, 6 Odyssey Programs and 3 special programs - for a middle school group on the trail, and two days of rotational mini outdoor workshops for 90 local students.

#### **Park Attendance and Revenue -**

- Final visitation number since September 2012: **4,889**
- Day Use Revenue: **\$9,450**
- Total Revenue: **\$20,465**, including donations and gift-shop sales - and \$7,100 in Special Use Permit fees and a donation to education programs, from a Subaru Publicity Event held at the park in January.

#### **Executive Director Visit -**

**New Arizona State Parks Director, Bryan Martin**, attended the November FOSP Board Meeting in the Kannally Ranch House living room and sparked a lively and candid roundtable discussion followed by applause -- about Arizona State Parks' priorities, where OSP falls in the picture, and how to increase Oracle's visibility as a reasonable day trip destination from Maricopa County (Phoenix area) -- notably the largest population in the state and no state parks within its boundary.

#### **Volunteer Recognition Potluck -**

Held April 19 -- thanks to all who joined us at the Kannally Ranch House! **73** volunteers gave nearly **5,000** hours from January 1, 2012 to March 31, 2013 since the park reopened to the public after the budget crisis closure in 2009. Thank you **Harry McWilliams** for the over 2800 hours you've given to the park since 1994. Special recognition also goes to **Mary Ann Pogany** (1555 hours), **Cindy Krupicka** (1374 hours) and **Stan Bembenek** (1108 hours); also **Val Bembenek**, **Chuck LeFevre**, **Mary Bast**, **John Rendall**, **Don Raffety**, **Jim Austin**, **Dick Boyer**, **Darrell Klesch**, **Gene Smith** and **Neil Krupicka** for most cumulative hours given to Arizona State Parks. Special recognition for most hours donated in the last year to Oracle State Park, goes to: **the AmeriCorps team**, **David Goodwin**, **Harvey Kneisc**, **Val Bembenek**, **Stan Bembenek**, **Mary Bast**, **Cindy Krupicka**, **John Rendall**, **Harry McWilliams**, **Mary Ann Pogany**, **Dick Boyer**, **Pat Berky** and **Laurie Bryant**. And thanks once again to **Friends of Oracle State Park** for sponsoring the raffle prizes.

#### **S.W.O.T. Analysis -**

In March, Arizona State Parks staff met with community partners and volunteers at Oracle, to consider OSP's strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats, in an effort to assess the way forward for all state parks. In general, "interpretation at parks" came up as both an opportunity and a weakness. **Volunteers and partners are invited again to participate with staff in an open discussion around the topic of interpretive and educational programming, in Phoenix August 14, from 10a-1p.** Contact Jennifer for more details or to catch a ride to the meeting.

#### **Friends financial support -**

Thanks to fundraising and advocacy by the Friends of Oracle State Park, the park opened for another 3 months this past fall, on Saturdays in September, October, and November. And while the contract ended and the park closed December and January, the momentum the Friends created led to Arizona State Parks refunding the opening of Oracle State Park in February, March, and April. In addition, the park opened on Sundays to the public as well, and educational programming by reservation continued weekdays.

**WELCOME NEW VOLUNTEERS**

Welcome **Liz Lafarge, Anne Lucic, Mike McFarland, Jill Gomery, Laurie Bryant, Mary Huebner, Karen Stevenson**, and belated Welcome and Farewell to onsite caretakers, **Harvey & Teresa Kneisc**.

### **RANGER STATUS**

Welcome new part time ranger, **Jasmine Duran**, now sharing the seasonal position with **Dale Redies**.

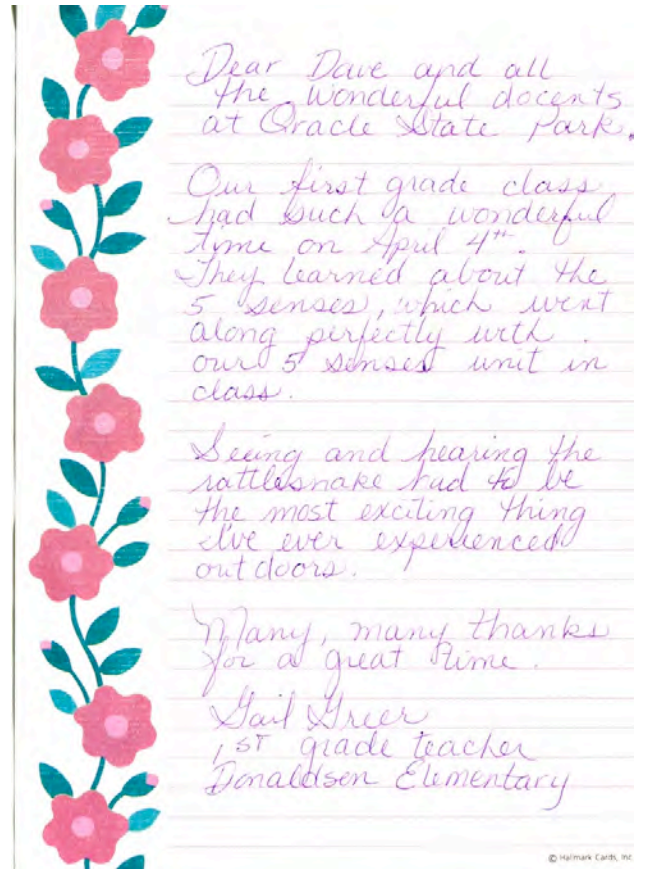
**Resident Ranger Jennifer Rinio** will be full time at Oracle State Park October through April but can be reached at Catalina State Park over the summer months.

**Park Manager Steve Haas** can still be reached at his Catalina State Park office, generally Tuesday through Saturday. He is best reached by email: [shaas@azstateparks.gov](mailto:shaas@azstateparks.gov)

### **A NOTE TO VOLUNTEERS**

Thanks for your patience and understanding as a skeleton crew of ranger staff attempts to operate a park that used to have four year-round full time rangers in addition to double the seasonal hours. It's a work in progress to balance the administrative and operational demands and give proper attention to the Volunteer Program. Communication will improve with more frequent email updates replacing this once a year double dose newsletter. And thanks

again to those of you volunteers who helped coordinate other volunteers. You rock.



***Sorry if any names were missed with thank yous!***